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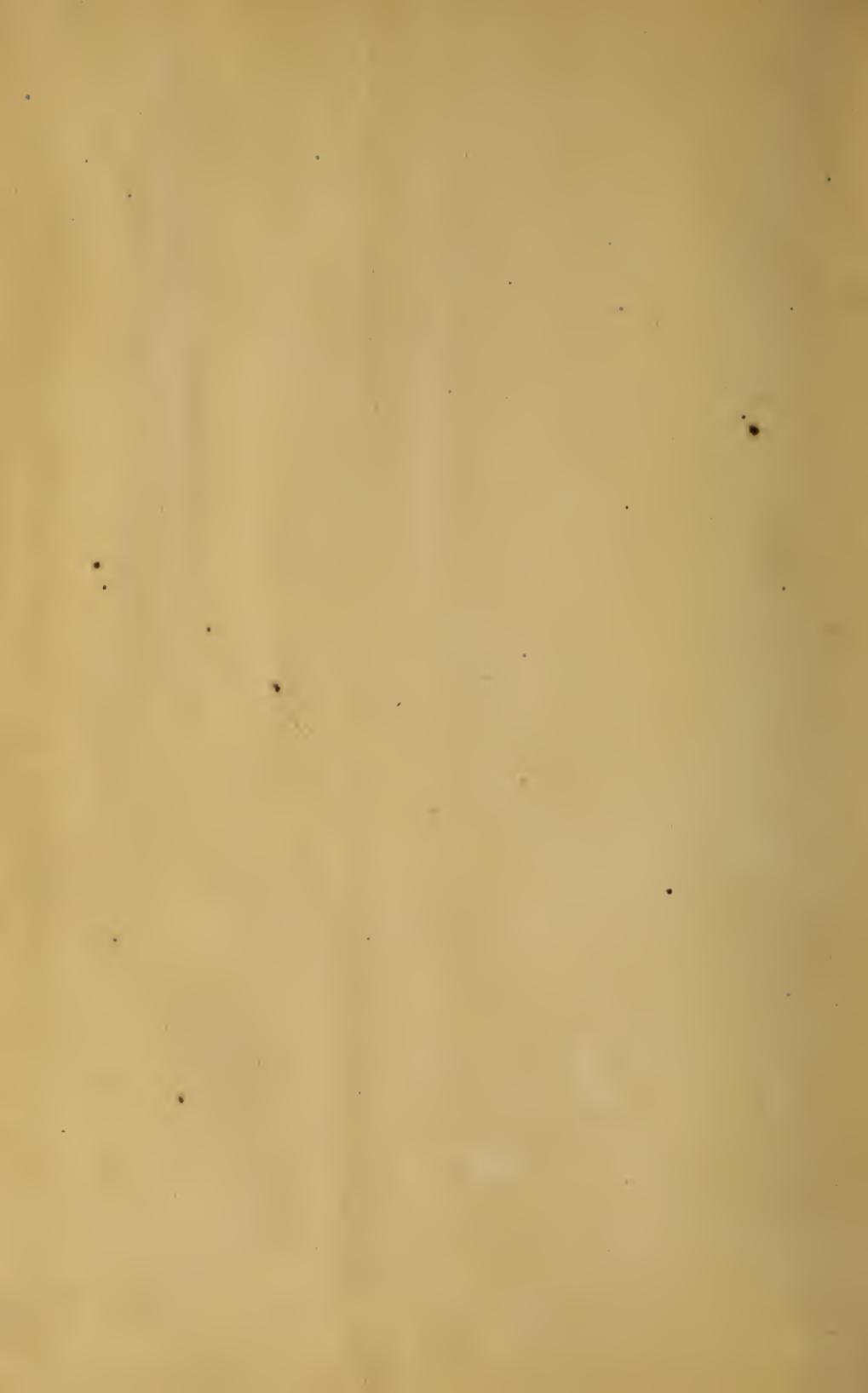
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POT-POURRI

Syndicate, prend.

William James Linton



PARODY will only strike at what is chimerical and false; it is not a piece of buffoonery so much as a critical exposition.

D'ISRAELI'S *Curiosities of Literature.*

S. W. Linton

1875

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POT-POURRI

THE RUINED PALACE
DREAM-MERE
ISRAFIDDLESTRINGS
THE GHOULS IN THE BELFRY
HULLALOO
TO ANY
HANNIBAL LEIGH
RAVING
THE MONSTER MAGGOT
POETIC FRAGMENTS
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THE RUINED PALACE

IN a green depth, like a chalice,
By most sweet flowers tenanted,
Stood a fair and stately palace.
There a poet soul--now dead--
Lived in days in vain lamented,--
Had lived to-day,
But was wayward—or demented,
Weak or worse,—who dares to say?

For his thought was streak'd with fancies,
To all simple truth untrue:
Bizarre as the hues of pansies,—
The dark shades he knew.

And he wander'd from this Aidenn :
 Wander'd, and was lost, alas !
 Though his own belovèd maiden
 Track'd his footsteps through the grass.

He return'd not. Devastation
 Housed in his disorder'd rooms ;
 On his couch lay Desolation ;
 Vampyres flitted through the glooms.
 By the pure white Parian fountains
 Lounged the Ghouls obscenely bare :
 Never wind came from the mountains
 To refresh the stagnant air.

O'er the garden walks neglected
 Crawl'd the toad, the worm, the snail ;
 Droop'd the young buds unrespected :
 Loving care could not avail.
 For the poet soul, the master,
 Could alone that place
 Make beautiful and from disaster
 Free—as Aidenn—by God's grace.

When he the palace left, and garden,—
 The moment that he would depart—

* * * *

Speech is vain. And tears but harden
 On the world's ice heart.

DREAM-MERE

ON a root, knobb'd, gnarl'd, and lonely,
 Overstuck with toadstools only,
 Sits an Eidolon named Night,—
 On a toadstool half upright.
 I have seen this sprite but newly,
 And I look'd at him quite throughly,
 In his ultimate dim Thulè,
 As he sate there half upright,
 In a wild weird clime, and singing sublime,
 Out of tune—out of time.

Bottomless hollows and roaring floods,
 And caves and chasms and haunted woods,
 Forms that no man can discover
 For the dews that drip all over;
 Mountains toppling evermore
 Into seas without a shore;
 Shoreless seas that still aspire,
 Surging to hellish heavens of fire;
 Boundless lakes all lone and dead,
 Where sometimes Night lies outspread
 In the waters still and chilly,
 With his nose in a lolling lily.

By these shoreless lakes outspread,
 These lone waters, lone and dead,
 These lone waters, still and chilly
 (Night's nose in the lolling lily);
 By these toppling crags,—no river
 Murmurs near, no leaflets quiver,

All so dark and dead and chilly;
 By these dank woods, by the swamp
 Where the toad and bull-frog romp;—
 By these dismal tarns, by the holes
 Where dwell the Ghouls—
 Poor damp souls!
 By each corner mostunjolly,
 By each crevice melancholy,
 By my own poetic folly—
 Frenzy of poetic drift,
 In an unexpected rift,
 There, I swear, I met aghast
 In a sheet the unmemoried Past,
 In a shroud a Ghost whose eye
 Looking into vacancy
 Made me shudder, start, and sigh,—
 One forgotten, from thought outdriven,
 I know not whether on Earth or in Heaven.

For the heart whose woes are legion
 'Tis a peaceful, soothing region—
 This same desert drear of Night,
 Where the Eidolon sits upright
 On his toadstool, or outspread
 Lies lolling on his lily-bed,—
 For the spirit that likes a shadow
 'Tis, O 'tis an Eldorado,—
 Though the traveler, traveling through it,
 Ever fails to interview it
 (No one ever openly knew it),
 For its mysteries all are closed
 By the darkness superposed

Of the Eidolon, who, I ween,
 Wills not the formless should be seen :
 And thus the sad soul that here passes
 Is like a blind ass without glasses.

On his root, knobb'd, gnarl'd, and lonely,
 Overstuck with toadstools only,
 Squats the Eidolon named Night,
 Squats in sad poetic plight.
 Is there more, and would you know it,
 Fix the headgear of the Poet,
 Wandering God knows where, but newly
 From this ultimate dim Thulè.

ISRAFIDDLESTRINGS

The Angel Israfel whose heartstrings are a fiddle.

IN heaven a Spirit doth dwell
 Whose heartstrings are a fiddle
 (The reason he sings so well—
 This fiddler Israfel),
 And the giddy stars (will any one tell
 Why giddy ?) to attend his spell
 Cease their hymns in the middle.

On the height of her go
 Totters the Moon and blushes
 As the song of that fiddle rushes
 Across her bow.
 The red Lightning stands to listen ;
 And the eyes of the Pleiads glisten
 As each of the seven puts its fist in
 Its eyes, for the mist in.

And they say—it's a riddle—
That all these listening things,
That stop in the middle
For the heart-strung fiddle
With which the Spirit sings,
Are held as on a griddle
By these unusual strings.

Wherefore thou art not wrong,
Israfel! in that thou boastest
Fiddlestrings uncommon strong:
To thee the fiddle-strings belong
With which thou toastest
Other hearts, as on a prong.

Yes! heaven is thine: but this
Is a world of sours and sweets,—
Where cold meats are cold meats,
And the eater's most perfect bliss
Is the shadow of him who treats.

If I could griddle
As Israfiddle
Has griddled,—he fiddle as I,—
He might not fiddle so wild a riddle
As this mad melody,
While the Pleiads all would leave off in the middle
Hearing my griddle-cry.

THE GHOULS IN THE BELFRY

HEAR the story of the Ghouls !
 Who will tell us of the Ghouls ?
 Who has been told ?
 Of the Ghouls, Ghouls, Ghouls,—
 Who are neither man nor woman,
 Who are neither beast nor human,
 Who are neither fish nor cayman,—
 Who will tell us, clerk or layman ?

They are Ghouls :
 Live in holes
 Like moles
 Under the boles, boles, boles
 Of old trees where the forest rolls
 Of the mouldy days of old ;
 Or in tarns, tarns, tarns
 Dull and dismal as the yarns
 Of morbific spools,—
 Dank tarns and dismal pools.
 There dwell the Ghouls,
 With other tarn'd fowls,—
 Not to say fools.

But the high tarn nation place is
 The dank tarn of Auber
 In the Ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.
 There they sit with their faces
 Bow'd down to their knees,
 At the feet of dead trees,
 With the dew dropping down from their hair,
 They sit there from the end of October
 To the end of the winter next year.

These are woodlandish Ghouls,
 Damp, desolate souls
 Who have nothing to do
 But be haunting the dank tarn of Auber
 Through the milderwest part of the year,
 That begins at the end of October
 In the woodlandish Ghouldom of Weir.

Yes! these are the woodlandish Ghouls—
 Ghouls—Ghouls—Ghouls
 With no business kind of controls—
 Mere shoals.
 But busier,—ah! much busier poll
 Have the Churchyard Ghouls,
 Prowling there for the bodies of poor dead souls;
 And who after supper
 Take an upper
 Climb to their goal in the steeple:
 Where they sit, where they brood, where they heap ill
 On the people undergone:
 Sitting cheeks by jowls.
 Now and then they roll a stone,
 Having set the bells a-tolling
 In a muffled monotone,
 On the people undergone.
 And their King it is who tolls,
 As he lolls, lolls, lolls
 On his throne all carved with scrolls
 In his palace in the steeple,
 Where he lolls among his people:
 Ah! his people who roll stones,
 In muffled monotones,
 On the hearts o' the underfolk,

In the dead of night awoke
 By the melancholy yells,
 By the miserable howls,
 To say nothing of the growls,
 Of these Ghouls,
 Of these tollers of the bells,
 As they toll, toll, toll ;
 Toll ;
 Toll ;
 Toll
 A pæan from the bells :
 And the merry bosom swells
 Of the Ghoul-King as he tolls,
 As he dances and he yells
 To the throbbing of the bells
 As they toll,
 Toll,
 Toll.

It is so the poet tells
 Who has heard these ghoulish bells ;
 And whose rheumy running rhyme,
 Bowld in time, time, time,
 With the throbbing and the sobbing
 And the bobbing and hobnobbing
 And sense-robbing of the bells,
 Could alone expound their yells,
 For the clamor each expels,
 From the loud full-hammer'd tone,
 Sometime hoarsening to a groan,
 Sometime worsening to a moan,
 Till one bell tolls out alone
 In a muffled monotone

Between murmuring and moan,—
 Till the King loll'd there, as shown,
 On his scroll-becarven throne,
 Grown weary of the yells
 And the bowling of the bells
 (Well! well!—to be so bold)
 As they moan and groan and yell
 Pell-mell,
 Would be fain to be unthrone,
 For the pain too wholly own'd,
 Untold but wholly known,
 (Toll de roll!)
 Of the moans, groans, yells,
 As they shake the steeple stone
 And awake the undergone
 (Rest his soul!)
 With the tolling of their knells,
 Roll'd like blood-drops from heart-wells,
 Misereres out of cells,
 Or weird witch-moulded spells
 Under fells :
 The bells, bells, bells,
 Whose tolling ever tells
 Of Ghouls, of hells, of knells,
 Told by bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells,
 The unholy yelling, knelling, wholly sense-dispelling,
 Moaning, groaning, all-atoning,
 Rolling tolling of the bells,
 Bells,
 Bells.

HULLALOO

THE eves were as grey as grey embers,
 The leaves dirty yellow and sere,—
 They were yellow, but dusky and sere ;
 That eve was the worst of November's,—
 And they are the worst of the year.
 'Twas an eve that one surely remembers,
 Being out in the dusk with my dear :
 For the fire was gone out to weak embers ;
 So I went out too, with my dear.

Hear then !—Through an alley Satanic
 Of hemlock, I roam'd with my love,—
 Of hemlock with Sarah, my love.
 O my passion was quite oceanic,
 With waves like the wind in a grove,
 When the wind maketh waves in a grove
 And the leaves with a sort of a panic
 Seem taken ; I thought of the stove
 And, shivering, as if with a panic
 Was taken, at thought of the stove.

Our talk at the first had been jolly,
 But our words soon were slow as our walk,—
 Our young memories scarcely could walk ;
 Then we thought it was right melancholy
 To be out in the dark without talk--
 For we knew that we came out to talk ;
 Still we felt in our hearts it was folly
 The vast dream of silence to baulk,
 Till, whispering at last, I said—Golly !
 And Sarah back whisper'd me—Lawk !

And now as the night was senescent,
 And some roosters were hinting of morn,—
 Foolish roosters then hinting of morn !—
 As the night grew more old and unpleasant,
 We saw in the distance a horn
 Out of which a miraculous crescent
 To the sides of the road was outborne ;
 'Twas Sal's father's horn lanthorn there present,
 The crescent distinct from the horn.

And I said—He is better than Dian ;
 But I wish that his light had more size,—
 And the light wasn't much for its size;
 He has guess'd—that's a thing to rely on—
 Has father, the way our walk lies,
 And he has come out like Orion,
 The fellow up there in the skies,—
 Yes, Sally ! those stars in the skies,—
 Come out like another Orion
 To help me take care of my prize,
 To take her safe home bye and bye on
 The pathway that fatherward lies.

But Sarah, uplifting her finger,
 Said—Surely that light I mistrust,—
 That lanthorn I strangely mistrust ;
 O hasten ! O let us not linger !
 O fly ! let us fly ! for we must.
 In terror she spoke, letting sink her
 Voice,—O he'll make such a dust !
 In anguish she sobb'd, letting sink her
 Sweet voice, as if fearing a bust,—
 O but father'll kick up such a dust !

I replied—this is nothing but dreaming ;
 We need but keep out of the light,—
 But he kept dodging us with the light ;
 And Sarah would soon have been screaming.—
 She shook like a leaf with affright,
 Like a leaf, or a bird in a fright ;
 So I lifted her out of the gleaming
 Through a gap in the hedge, out of sight :
 And her father went on, never deeming
 He left us behind in the night.

Then to pacify Sarah I kiss'd her,
 And soon took her out of the gloom,—
 It was getting quite cold in the gloom,
 And she cried ; but I said—Dear ! desist or
 I never shall get you safe home.
 Then we ran and in good time got home.
 Father said—How on airth have I miss'd her ?
 She said—I was never from home.
 No, Pa ! I was never from home.
 I have been all the night in my room.

Now my head is as grey as an ember ;
 And my heart is all crisped and sere,—
 Like a crisp leaf that's wither'd and sere ;
 And yet I am fain to remember
 Above all the nights in the year—
 Ah, Sally ! if you were but here—
 That night of all nights in the year—
 Ah, Sally ! if you were but here—
 That cold dreamy night of November,
 That night of all nights in the year,
 That long ago night of November,—
 The night we were out in, my dear !

TO ANY

THANK heaven ! the crisis
 Of hunger is past ;
 And you can't guess how nice is
 This little breakfast,
 Now the thing call'd good living
 Is come to at last.

I eat what I love
 And recover my strength ;
 And my jaws only move
 As I lie at full length.
 I might sit—but I feel
 I am better at length.

And I lie so composedly ,
 Feeding and fed ,
 A careless beholder
 Might fancy me dead :
 Not seeing my jaws work
 Might fancy me dead .

The grunting and groaning ,
 The writhing and raving ,
 Are quieted now ,
 With that horrible craving
 At stomach—that horrible
 Stomachic craving .

The sickness , the faintness ,
 The emptiness-pain ,
 Have ceased ; and my stomach's
 A stomach again ,

And feels like a stomach
Not living in vain.

And oh ! of all tortures
That torture the worst
Has abated,—the terrible
Torture of thirst

For a naphthaline river
Or fusil lake burst :
I'd have drunk dirty water,
For quenching that thirst,

Of a puddle that flows
With a smell and no sound
From a hole but a very few
Feet underground,
Though I holded my nose
As I stoop'd to the ground.

And ah ! let it never
Be foolishly said
That this my mahogany
Is not well spread :
With such victual before me
I call it a spread ;
And such drink—my cosmogony
Knows nought instead.

My tantalized spirit
Here blandly reposes :
The upsetting or ever
'Twas wetting one's nose is
All over. Sweet spirit !
Thy scent in my nose is.

And now while so pleasantly
 Curl'd up it fancies
 A fragranter odour
 Than rue has, or pansies,
 Or even than rosemary
 Mingled with pansies,—
 The beautiful bourbon
 The Puritan fancies.

And so I lie happily,
 Drinking a many
 And eating a few.
 It will cost a big penny.
 I don't mind the cost:
 For I have not a penny.

* * * * *



HANNIBAL LEIGH

IT was many and many a year ago—
 It seems so long to me—
 That there lived in a city which you may know
 A man named Hannibal Leigh;
 And this man he seem'd to have nothing to do
 But to drink and get drunk with me.

I was a fool and he was a fool,
 In this city by the sea:
 For we drank and got drunk till we made it a rule
 That neither should drunker be;
 And we drank till we might have lesson'd a school
 Of fishes, such drinkers were we.

And this was the reason that long ago
 In this city by the sea
 A fusilier spirit of ill distilling
 Destroy'd my Hannibal Leigh.
 'Twas a spirit of ill when my pal was willing
 To drink for ever with me;
 And some were saying—it was fulfilling
 A kind o' warning to me.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
 Went envying him and me,—
 Yes! that was the reason, whatever was given
 In that city by the sea,
 Why the fusilier spirit came out a-killing
 My still-swilling Hannibal Leigh.

But I drink all the longer and drink it more strong,
 For the two, for I drink like three,—
 For myself once and twice for Leigh;
 And no fusil here nor in heaven along
 Nor spirit down under the sea
 Shall ever dissever our drinks to do wrong
 To the spirit of Hannibal Leigh.

For whenever I drink I endeavor to think
 I am drinking with Hannibal Leigh;
 And my hand never raise but to drink to the praise
 Of my drink-Kaiser Hannibal Leigh;
 And in all the night tide I hold on to the side
 Of the counter, the counter where Hannibal died;
 And I think that I Hannibal see
 And I'm Hannibal Hannibal's me.

RAVING

ONCE upon a midnight, weary,
 As I maunder'd, gin-and-beery,
 O'er an' oft repeated story
 Till my friends thought me a bore,—
 Sitting weeping, and half sleeping,
 Something set my flesh a-creeping,
 And I saw a Raven peeping
 Through my room's unopen'd door.
 See that Raven ! said I to them,—
 Trying to get through the door,—
 A black Raven—nothing more.

Now I was not drunk, but weary,
 For my head was out-of-geary
 With close study of quaint volumes
 Curious in forgotten lore :
 (Though they said Delirium tremens)
 I'd been reading bits of Hemans,
 And some leaves of Jacob Behmen's,
 Two or three—perhaps a score : .
 And I said—It *is* a Raven
 Rampant just outside the door,—
 Striding through—I said—and swore.

I insisted, and I twisted
 And resisted, and persisted
 Though they held me and, close-fisted,
 Saw no Raven at the door ;
 I forgot all I had read of,—
 For that ill bird took my head off,

Like a coffin lid of lead off
 The dead brain of one no more.
 Would I trust their words instead of
 What I saw right through the door?
 Through the door—I said—and swore.

Yes! it is a Raven surely,
 Though he does look so demurely
 Like a doctor come to assure me
 I am drunk: not so—I swore,
 Drunk? I drunk? I've not been drinking;
 I'm but overcome with thinking:
 There I saw that Raven winking
 In the middle of the floor.
 Doctor! there's the Raven rampant
 In the middle of the floor:
 He has hopp'd straight through the door.

Look! his curst wings brush the dust off
 That fallen, broken, batter'd bust of
 Psyche,—where it lies in the shadow,
 Shatter'd, flung down on the floor.
 See! he spurns the broken pieces.
 Catch him, Doctor!—when he ceases
 He will rend me. Past release is—
 Nothing! Nothing on the floor?—
 Yes! the Psyche lies in the shadow,
 Lieth shatter'd on the floor:
 To be lifted nevermore.

* * * * *

THE MONSTER MAGGOT

A POET!—With never a single theme
 Of glory or delight,
 He folds his wings for a gloomy dream
 Of Death despair-bedight;
 And, willing not that Beauty use
 His wilderness of soul,
 He chooseth for his daintier muse
 Raven or Ghoul.

And now a “Conqueror Worm” he sings,—
 A blood-red crawling shape,
 Invisible woe from its condor wings
 Out-flapping, all agape;
 While angels bewing’d, bedight in veils,
 Watch mumbling mimes, with tears,
 In a play where a maniac Horror wails
 To the music of the spheres.

The play is the play of Human Woes,
 Of Madness, Sin, and Death:
 There is nothing else the Poet knows
 God’s azure sky beneath
 But Madness, Horror, and Sin,
 Death and Sorrow, and Wrong:
 Even so doth the Singer begin,
 *So ends his Song.

“It writhes”—the Worm,—“with mortal pangs
 The mimes become its food;
 “And the angels sob at vermin fangs
 In human gore imbued,”—

This monster terrible, formless, huge,
 Means—put in plainest terms:
 Our Poet needs a vermifuge.
 The child's disease is *worms*.



POETIC FRAGMENTS

PART OF AN UNFINISHED GHoul-POEM—

SAID *we* then—the two, then—Ah! can it
 Have been that the woodlandish Ghous—
 The pitiful, the merciful Ghous—
 To bar up our way and to ban it
 From the secret that lies in these wolds—
 From the thing that lies hidden in these wolds—
 Have drawn up the spectre of a planet
 From the limbo of lunary souls—
 This sinfully scintillant planet
 From the hell of the planetary souls?

POT-POURRI—

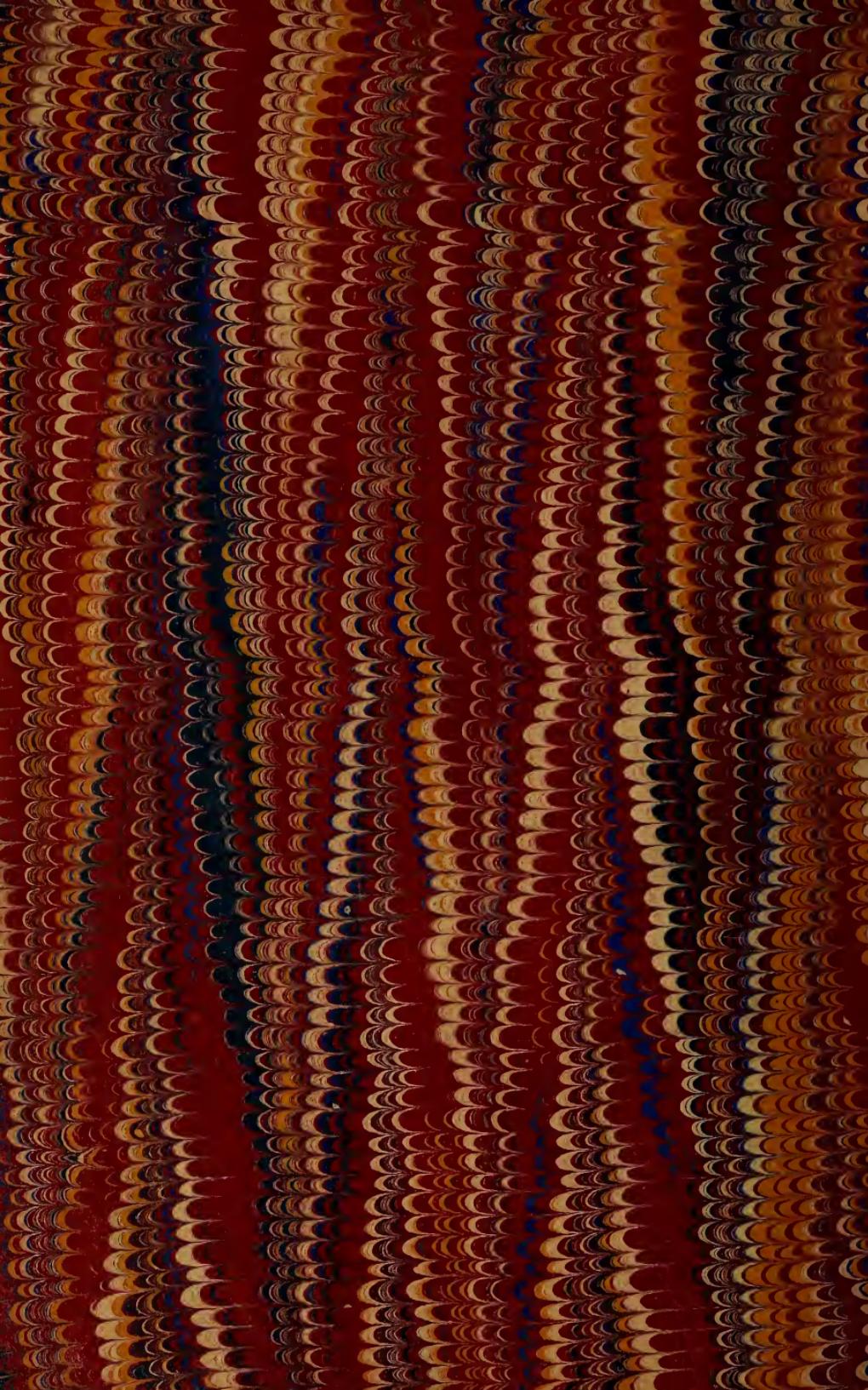
“A ROSEMARY odour
 “Commingled with pansies—
 “With rue” :—
 Your poet has fancies:
 But methinks such an odour
 Were odious to more than a few.

UNDER-LINES

On a Poet's Tomb.

TOMB'D in dishonor! Not like thine own Ghoul
Have I thus dug thee out, Unhappy One!
For critical devouring; but some words
Writ heedlessly above thee call for words
Of answering rebuke. If Israfel
In heaven needs his own heart-strings for his lyre—
The only organ of harmonious worth—
Shall not earth's poet? And if he be weak,
Rent by ill memories, harsh with sour desire,
Untunable, rejoicing not in good,
Can aught but discord issue? Speech absurd
Of "art for art's sake!" when art is not art
Out of the circles of the universe,
Out of the song of the eternities,
Or unfit to attend the ear of God.

My mocking words aim at, not thee, but those
Who would strain praise for thee, disgracing Truth.





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